

# RCCG NEWS

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## *RCCG Contact Information*

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## *Important Dates*

Sunday June 8 - Garden  
Inspection

Saturday, October 4 - Garden  
Potluck

Sunday, October 5, Rain Date for  
Garden Potluck

October 18 - Saturday - Fall  
Clean up

October 19 - Sunday - Final  
Inspection



## President's Corner

By Joe Nelson, RCCG President

Summer is coming and I hope your gardens are shaping up. It's been a cool, and although wet, enjoyable May but, I'm sure we will be paying for our sins soon enough. Although the summer heat and humidity in the DC area can be oppressive to gardeners, it will make the plants grow. Tomatoes, squash, corn, okra, and many others will flourish...as will weeds! A couple of reminders for you for problem free and safe garden season.

1

**PRESIDENTS  
MESSAGE**

Joe Nelson

3

**GARDEN  
WILDLIFE**

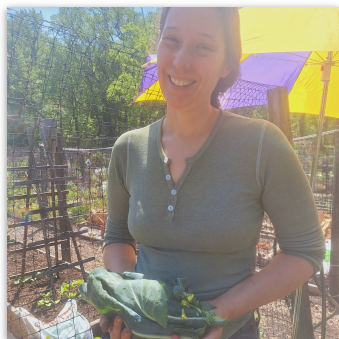
4

**WEED  
PREVENTION**

7

**FEATURED  
GARDENERS**  
Koki and Yanan  
Nagata

- \* Please ensure that you are gardening safely. This means don't garden alone or least without a working cell phone.
- \* Lock your vehicles and keep valuables out of sight.
- \* Stay hydrated, respect your limits, and avoid working in the heat of midday or afternoon. Heat isn't the only danger.
- \* Be aware of ticks which can carry Lyme disease.
- \* Luckily, we don't or shouldn't have issues with dangerous snakes or other pests (black or bull snakes you might see are very beneficial, going after mice, rats, and rabbits.) Also just be aware of your surroundings and conditions.
- \* As the heat increases be aware that weeds and in general, all plants are going to explode in growth. If you don't pay attention, it can be a lot of work to keep them under control. A good practice is working at it in more frequent small chunks, and paying special attention to early growth keeps it under control. Be mindful of growth on your fences and please don't use exterior fencing as a means to support vines or branches.
- \* We are extremely fortunate that we have a water irrigation system and that depends on a few things.
  - \* First is the two Park service provided faucets in the center and West side of the garden.
  - \* Two is the infrastructure that we've put in to get the water to various hoses in the garden. You may have noticed that both Park Service faucets are leaking, the center one being much more serious than the West one. We are working with the Park Service to get them fixed but, please be patient as they have less resources and manpower than normal and things take additional time.
  - \* We also ask that you take care of hoses and the faucets, they are attached to whether it be our faucets or the central park service ones. Please be gentle and mindful. If you see or have an issue with water system, please let us now.
- \* Lastly please enjoy gardening, enjoy and meet the community and thanks to all of you who volunteer to make the garden a special place. Happy gardening



## Wildlife in the Garden

When we think of Rock Creek wildlife, we might consider the deer and the rabbits, the moles and voles, all those who eat our produce. What you may not consider are snakes. The black rat snakes are our friends. They provide a service (at a minimum, mole and vole control) to the garden, so if you see one in the garden, let him/her be. They don't attack and generally more scared of you than you are of them. Black Ratsnake (*Elaphe obsoleta*) – A large and harmless black snake that can grow up to 80 inches long (6.5 feet). The body is shaped like a loaf of bread. Belly is black and white checkered becoming gray near the tail. Baby or juvenile black rat snakes are often confused with other snakes as they are gray or brown with black blotches on the body. They are wonderful at taking care of rats and mice. <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Reptiles/Black-Rat-Snake>.

Historically, there have also been spottings of Eastern Garter snakes in the garden. This snake too is non-venomous and will only strike out if startled and out of aggression. The eastern garter snake has a distinctive color pattern – dark brown, olive, or a green back marked with white or yellow stripes running through the center. There may even be two less prominent stripes running parallel to the sides, varying in color from white to yellow, brown to green, or even bluish. In rare cases, some garter snakes may have an all-black body sans the stripes. The area within the stripes has green or black spots arranged in a checkboard pattern. Their belly appears yellowish-green with indistinct black spots arranged in two rows, mostly overlapped by their keeled scales.

The juvenile garter snakes closely resemble adults in color and appearance. <https://thesnakeguide.com/snakes-in-us/>

When we've left them alone and gone about our business, the snakes have disappeared shortly after we walked away from them.



# Weed Prevention and Removal

by Anita Albertson

I was reading an article that talked about eco-friendly ways of weeding. Some are more practical than others for the purposes of RCCG.

1. Boiling water - it kills the immediate plant and does localized harm that passes quickly.
2. Vinegar/salt/soap mixture - Horticultural vinegar is far more acidic than table vinegar - both can work in the right concentrations. But also the strong acidic ph - can kill the good plants too - although it doesn't always effect the corms, rhizomes, and roots. The salt and soap serves a similar, but different chemical process.
  - By changing the qualities in the soil, you need to be very careful that you are not killing the good soil buddies or poisoning the soil for your valued plants. I would suggest this is best for the hard to reach weeds by your fence line. Still you have to be very careful that it doesn't flow downhill and pollute your neighbors plot.
3. Cardboard and other sunlight blocking agents - Blocking the sun prevents many plants from carpeting the area.
  - Black plastic heats up the ground and kills everything - good, bad, neutral - flora and microorganisms - many of which enrich your soil.
  - Gardening Cloth - allows for some air flow and water passing - which doesn't kill quite as much of the good and bad. Both of these contain plastic that will leach into your soil. Either can be effective, but if you use them for a prolonged period of time they will weaken the health of your soil.
  - Cardboard/newspaper - remove all the tape and staples and non-paper labels first. Most Amazon boxes and Washington Posts use soy inks and so are considered safe for the purposes of the garden. For other boxes, containers and newspapers it is worth double checking their safety before using them.
  - Cardboard blocks the sun and feeds the soil. It doesn't kill all weeds, but the remaining weeds are easier to pluck out and deal with. If you have a gap, there will be weeds who find the space in the gap. After using cardboard - you will see how comparatively lovely your soil appears - I often lay the cardboard in my paths and then cover them with a bit of dirt and woodchips or straw and have been happy with the result
4. Hand pulling weeds - The tried and true method of getting rid of the weeds.



This takes a sustained effort. Although by beginning in the spring with a thorough cleaning, and continuing each week with a 5-15 min tidying up - you shouldn't find it too overwhelming.

Learn about your plot's weeds - and address them correctly

- some are deep like dandelion and pinella ternata (lily weed) - some are superficial and abundance like clover and wood sorrel,
- some have a labyrinth of roots like mint, bindweed, morning glory, wire grass, mugwort, and bitter yellow cress
- some have airborne seeds and corms - like nutsedge, pinella ternata, and onion chives.
- Sometimes people do the minimum at weeding/pulling weeds which can work in the short term and can devastate your plot for years to come. Merely pulling the tops and covering the bottoms with straw or new compost might help you pass this year's inspections - but each future year will get harder and harder to silence the challenge the weeds bring.
- While, I am not expert, I have a bit of experience. Do your own experiments and see what rings true for you.

## Poetry Corner

This is a classic by an American Modernist and Imagist shared with me by a fellow gardener. She wanted me to use it in the April Newsletter, but who would have thought May would be the rainiest month, hence it's perfect to launch (hopefully) a warm sunny Jun for our tomatoes and make those clouds and thunderstorms go bye-bye.

### *The Red Wheelbarrow*

*By William Carlos Williams*

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens

## Recipe Corner

### *Tomato & egg stir-fry – a 10-minute dish*

#### Ingredients:

- Your garden tomatoes (2-3, large)
- Eggs (2 or 3)
- Scallion (1)

#### Sauces and seasonings:

- Cooking oil (any kind)
- Rice wine (optional)

White pepper (optional) and salt

- Sugar (small amount)
- Soy sauce (small amount)



#### 1. Preparation:

- Cut tomatoes into small wedges (remove the tomato skin if you don't like it before cutting).
- Finely chop the scallions.
- Crack eggs into a bowl, seasoning with a pinch of white pepper and a drop of rice wine, and stir well.

#### 2. Stir-fry eggs:

Heat the pan/wok (or whatever you have) just to begin having smokes; add cooking oil and pour in the eggs; scramble them and set aside.

#### 3. Stir-fry tomatoes:

Add a bit of cooking oil to the hot pan, add scallions until they become a bit brownish, then add the tomatoes. Stir-fry for two minutes until the tomatoes become soft.

#### 4. Combine and season to taste:

Add eggs into the pan. Add sugar, salt, and soy sauce to taste. Stir well. Garnish with finely chopped scallions (green part) or fresh basil.

#### Tips:

- 1) Great to eat with rice or bread
- 2) Adding rice wine and/or white pepper into beaten eggs can help reduce the fishy smell. But it is totally optional.

## Featured Gardeners -Koki and Yanan Nagata

1. When did you first join RCCG community, and were you on the waiting list long?

We joined the RCCG community in the spring of 2010 after being on the waiting list for about a year.

2. Have you always been gardeners, and did your families when you were growing up have gardens to grow vegetables?

I developed a passion for gardening as a kid, all thanks to my mom, a true gardening enthusiast with a green thumb. She showed me the ropes, and we spent so many joyful hours together in the big backyard of our home, which felt more like a mini farm than just a garden. We built fences using the most primitive materials, such as dried corn stalks and sweet potato vines, to defend the vegetables from the hungry chickens and ducks. We grew all kinds of vegetables throughout the year. Through it all, I learned more than just how to plant and harvest; I learned to care for the earth and appreciate the natural rhythm of the seasons. Those moments are some of my favorite childhood memories, and they've shaped my love for nature and growing things. Interestingly, my husband, Koki, had a similar gardening experience growing up in a small town in Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. Just like me, he spent his childhood helping in the family garden, learning how to grow fresh vegetables and enjoying the simple joys of working with nature. We both look back on this fondly, and it's a big part of why gardening is so special to us today.



3. Do you like gardening together, and who is the cook?

For the past 15 years, gardening at RCCG has brought so much joy and color to our daily lives. Koki is the breakfast expert, always up early to whip up something delicious, while I take charge of dinner, bringing the day to a cozy close with a hearty homemade meal. It's a rhythm we've grown into and love, rooted in the garden and nurtured in the kitchen.

4. What do you like to grow, and what have you already planted? Is there a special Asian vegetable you grow that you would recommend?

We love all kinds of seasonal vegetables. Tomatoes and peppers are our favorites for summer, and daikon is our favorite for late fall.

Growing daikon, the crisp and juicy Japanese radish, has been one of our favorite parts of gardening. It's surprisingly easy to grow and rewarding to harvest those long, white roots fresh from the soil. In the kitchen, daikon is incredibly versatile; we enjoy it pickled for a tangy crunch, freshly grated as a refreshing side to ribeye steak, or simmered with miso for a comforting, flavorful dish.

Sure. A tomato & egg stir-fry recipe is attached.

5. What do you do outside of gardening?

I'm working full-time while Koki has retired. He has been practicing yoga and tennis regularly outside of gardening.

6. What do you like about our community, and what would you like to see improved?

We love the generosity of the RRCG community. It's wonderful to share tips and enjoy gardening together. It's inspiring to see so many different plants and ideas all in one place!

7. Would you share a favorite recipe? Sure. A tomato & egg stir-fry recipe is included in the newsletter